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Special Report

Helms, the Man At CIA Helm, Is 'Top Secret'

By Newsweek Feature Service

WASHINGTON — In a recent edition of "Who's Who in America," the official biography for one Richard McGarrath Helms is less than an inch long. It identifies him simply as a "govt. ofcl.," lists prosaic things like his education



HELMs

credentials (B.A. Williams Coll. 1935), his clubs (Chevy Chase, City Tavern Assn.) and his office address: Central Intelligence Agy., Washington, 20505.

What the brief sketch doesn't mention, however, is that in the colorful career of the tall, handsome Helms, the U.S.'s chief intelligence officer, there is enough intrigue and deriding-do to fill a dozen spy novels.

Take, for instance, the time in 1956 just after Nikita Khrushchev had delivered his secret "de-Stalinization" speech to the Communist party Congress in Moscow.

As deputy chief of the CIA's Clandestine Services, Helms directed the agents who dummed up a copy of the speech with 32 derogatory inserts about neutral nations and their leaders. They then circulated it abroad — and caused the Russians some severe embarrassment.

OR TAKE THE TIME HELMS supervised an operation that involved the digging of a tunnel under 500 yards of East and West German soil to allow CIA agents to tap Moscow's phone conversations with the East German government, its own secret police agents in Germany and its own army command.

In all probability, most of Helms's career will remain classified "top secret" until long after his death — which is exactly as he would have it. As he told a recent meeting of the American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE) in Washington, "... it is axiomatic that an intelligence service— whatever type of government it serves — must wrap itself in as much secrecy as possible in order to operate effectively..."

The speech, Helms's first public address since he was named Director of the CIA in 1966, was encouraged by the Nixon Administration which had become disturbed by critics charging that an intelligence network is incompatible with a democratic society.

AFTER COUNTERING several criticisms with cool grace, Helms said, "We, the men of the degree take it on faith that we, too, are honorable men devoted to her service..."

In all official circles, Helms is already regarded not only as honorable but also as dedicated, talented and — the supreme accolade in a capital that has its share of high-level dilettantes — immensely professional.

Where once it was thought that Richard Nixon would replace Helms with a Republican appointee,

the current consensus is that when and if the President reorganizes the sprawling intelligence community he will solidify, rather than diminish, Helms's authority.

Helms already has three separate roles: CIA Director; overall Director of Central Intelligence (which means that he is chief intelligence adviser to the White House and Congress); and chairman of the U.S. Intelligence Board (which comprises all the other governmental intelligence outfits).

BUT HE HAS NO real authority over any group but the CIA. Under a reorganization, it is possible that Helms would either be given direct control of all intelligence operations or relocated in a special White House capacity.

Helms's quick mind, his remarkable grasp of complex issues, his insistence on staying out of the policy-making field and, above all, his forthrightness have earned him the respect of many of the Administration's severest congressional critics.

"Helms is great with Congress," says one Senate staffer. "He admits when he doesn't know something. He never lies."

He is also one of the most sought-after dinner guests in Washington — charming, witty, debonair, completely removed from the popular image of the nation's super-spy.

THE 58-YEAR-OLD Helms learned his social graces in Europe, where he spent two years in fashionable schools. After graduating from Williams, he went back to Europe as a wire service reporter. Utilizing his fluency in German (he also speaks almost flawless French), he managed to wangle an exclusive interview with one of the Continent's rising radical politicians, Adolf Hitler.

Financial and personal problems forced him to abandon reporting and join the business side of a newspaper in Indiana. Then, during World War II, he worked for the Office of Strategic Services, and as soon as the CIA was created in 1947, he signed on.

Through the years, he served in most of the agency's branches, so that when the time came for President Johnson to pick a new director in 1966, Helms was the career man had ever headed the agency before.

HELMs LIVES IN Washington with his second wife, Cynthia, whom he married in 1959. Between them they have five grown children.

He keeps in shape by playing a creditable game of tennis and, if rumors are to be believed, one of his favorite pastimes is a kind of busman's holiday: reading spy novels.

But mostly Helms devotes himself to his work — work that he believes, as he told the ASNE, "is necessary to permit this country to grow on in a fearsome world, and to find its way into a better and more peaceful one."

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Nixon, Richard

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Hearst's Report:

Still a Free, Critical Press

By WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST JR.
Editor-in-Chief, The Hearst Newspapers

WASHINGTON — Of all the balls, picnics and banquets newspapermen go to or have to go to throughout each year, by far the most interesting is the spring gathering of the ASNE. This translates into the American Society of Newspaper Editors and results in their meeting and discussing the future of our business and listening to panel discussions and speeches by high government officials.

The get-together is held four out of every five years in Washington. On the fifth year, the editors journey to some other city as they did last year to San Francisco and a few years ago to Montreal.

W. R. HEARST JR. I always find the ASNE get-together fun and productive—and this year's meeting was no exception. In fact it was one of the best because the president of the ASNE was Newbold Noyes, editor of The Washington Star, which has for many years been owned by his family and been regarded as the family newspaper of the Washington area.

Since Newbold is a Washingtonian through and through, he knew exactly the kind of program to put together to enlighten and entertain the editors and their wives. For example, instead of following the traditional custom of getting the Secretary of State or Secretary of Defense for a luncheon session, he pulled a real coup and got CIA Director Richard Helms to deliver his first public speech.

The next day he produced Sen. Henry (Scoop) Jackson of Washington, who, in my book, is one of the most responsible and dedicated public servants we have in government today.

In fact, I regard Scoop Jackson as the most qualified of all the possible Democratic contenders for next year's presidential nomination. He is a warm human being and has been a friend of mine for years. More to the point and the subject of his speech is a staunch advocacy of the kind of nuclear defense policy that would keep us ahead of the Soviets and prevent us ever having to bow to their blackmail.

Should next year's election develop into a contest between Scoop Jackson and Dick Nixon, I think the American people would not make a mistake whichever way they turned.

This theory was confirmed not only by hearing Scoop at the luncheon but also by President Nixon's appearance at the final ASNE banquet, where he was interrogated by a panel of tough, perceptive editors.

It was a special treat to hear and meet Dick Helms. I had known most of his predecessors at the CIA—Gen. Hoyt Vandenberg, Allen W. Dulles and John McCone. But I had never had the chance to even talk with Helms. He is just not the kind of fellow who circulates on the banquet circuit or gets into the public eye.

Helms advanced the very sound view that he and his agency should be anonymous, because they deal in highly secret security matters that should come to the attention only of the President and the National Security Council.

Anyone with an ounce of patriotism and concern for this nation should realize that men like Helms and his CIA associates are performing a vital service to the United States. So he took the opportunity to talk to America's editors about the place of an intelligence service in a democratic government, saying:

"In doing so, I recognize that there is a paradox which I hope can be dispelled.

"On the one hand, I can assure you that the quality of foreign intelligence available to the United States government in 1971 is better than it ever has been before.

"On the other hand, at a time when it seems to me to be self-evident that our government must be kept fully informed on foreign developments, there is a persistent and growing body of criticism which questions the need and the propriety for a democratic society to have a Central Intelligence Agency."

Helms dispelled the thought some editors might have had that the CIA was some sort of "big brother" police operation. It is wrong for liberal critics of our government to make such assertions—including the recent attempt to smear the aging J. Edgar Hoover as some sort of mean, senile Gestapo chieftain. I don't think the American people are about to turn their back on men like Hoover, who has served more than 40 years as chief of the FBI, or Helms, who has been with the CIA for more than 20 years. Both are Americans of whom we should be proud.

As the richest, most influential and most benevolent country in the world, we cannot afford to let our defenses down. We need every ounce of evidence we can lay our hands on about internal developments in various countries—both friends and foes—around this globe.

In a sense, the CIA does for the federal government what newspapers are supposed to do for the general public: Gather information and lay it out honestly and objectively for others to study.

The ASNE had on its agenda the question of whether reporting should be subjective or objective. In other words, the editors felt they had to debate the issue of whether reporters should fill the news columns with propaganda born of their own advocacy or whether they should report only the news, honestly and fairly—and as it happened.

To me, this is not a question worth debating. I learned from my father years ago there is no place in the news columns for subjective reporting. The place for newsmen to express their own prejudices is

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